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Committee on Conferences
Substantive session

Draft report

Addendum

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I. Calendar of conferences and meetings

C. Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources

4. Improved coordination of conference services

Introduction and overview

1. At its substantive session of 1995, the Committee on Conferences decided to consider, on a biennial basis, the means to ensure improved coordination of conference services within the United Nations system. Moreover, it requested Conference Services to maintain an active dialogue with the substantive secretariats of intergovernmental bodies, providing statistics and information on previous performance as well as guidelines on ways and means to enhance the utilization of conference-servicing resources. At its substantive session of 1996, the Committee had endorsed the idea of the Secretariat to make the active dialogue a permanent coordination feature and directed that such action should be taken at Headquarters, as well as the United Nations offices at Geneva and Vienna.

2. In addition, in paragraph 15 of its resolution 51/211 A of 18 December 1996, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure closer cooperation between Headquarters, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office at Nairobi in order to improve the coordination of conference services. In paragraph 16 of the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretariat to engage, on a regular basis, in an active dialogue with Member States as a permanent feature at Headquarters, as well as at the United Nations offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, in order to improve the coordination of conference services.

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3. Moreover, at its substantive session of 1998, the Committee requested the Secretary-General to review administrative instruction ST/AI/342 on guidelines for the preparation of host Government agreements falling under General Assembly resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985 to reflect the new organizational structure, which allowed for more effective coordination among the four United Nations conference-servicing centres in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, with a view to determining the most cost-effective option for the Organization while ensuring the required standard of service. This request was reiterated in paragraph 37 of General Assembly resolution 53/208 A of 18 December 1998.

4. At its 420th meeting, on 31 August 1999, the Committee considered an oral report on the matter.

Discussion

5. The view was expressed that the videoconference should be made part of a formal meeting of the Committee on Conferences, as its value would be enhanced and its findings could then be incorporated into the report of the Committee. The view was also expressed that the holding of the videoconference at the start of the session would enable members to make more effective use of the information provided at the videoconference.

6. The members were of the view that administrative instruction ST/AI/342 on guidelines for the preparation of host Government agreements falling under General Assembly resolution 40/243 needed to be revised to include the United Nations offices at Vienna and Nairobi. In response to questions raised, the Secretariat clarified that although the administrative instruction had not been revised, the policy did include the above-mentioned offices. It was also possible to issue a revision to the relevant administrative instruction addressing only the conference-servicing areas of responsibility.

Conclusions and recommendations

7. The Committee on Conferences took note with appreciation of the oral report presented on improved coordination of conference services.

8. The Committee requested the Secretariat, when preparing the draft agenda for the next substantive session of the Committee, to take into account the proposals regarding the inclusion and timing of the videoconference.

9. The Committee encouraged the Secretariat to continue the active dialogue between Conference Services and the secretariats of intergovernmental bodies.

10. The Committee looked forward to a revision of the relevant administrative instruction with regard to conference-servicing responsibility.

11. The Committee also encouraged expanded efforts towards a coordinated approach within Conference Services to efficiently and effectively provide services from all duty stations.